

Rhoades, Bessie M., botany workbook and notebooks

Bessie M. Rhoades botany workbook and notebooks

1903-1904

Title Statement

Rhoades, Bessie M., botany workbook and notebooks Bessie M. Rhoades botany workbook and notebooks
MSS 16776

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Publication Statement

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Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16776

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1515

Unit Date

1903-1904

Mixed Materials [X032652648]

1 (box)

Container

1-4 (folder)

Language

English

source

Max Rambod

Extent

0.12 Cubic Feet four letter-sized file folders six notebooks and one botany workbook

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was purchased from Max Rambod by the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 8 February 2023 and 1 March 2023.

Preferred Citation

MSS 16776, Bessie M. Rhoades botany workbook and notebooks, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

Bessie Mae Rhoades was an orphan at the Bethany Orphanage in Womeldorf, Pennsylvania in 1903. During the early 1900's, orphans were often children of neglect and poverty. Some sought out orphanages because the living conditions were an improvement over life at home or on the street. Rhoades detailed observations in her botany workbook demonstrate a young woman's strong interest in science at the turn of the twentieth century.

Content Description

This collection contains six handwritten notebooks and a workbook outlining botanic observations of Bessie M. Rhoades, an orphan at the Bethany Orphanage in Womeldorf, Pennsylvania. The collection highlights the study of science by a female student at the turn of the twentieth century. It is a personal archive detailing life inside an American orphanage during a pivotal moment in the history of child advocacy. The education provided by an orphanage could give students academic opportunities beyond their origins.

The notebooks are soft composition books with a range of covers, some patriotic, and range in size from 10" x 8" to 6" x 9" inches. Rhoades has written in each book in either pencil or pen, although all contain blank pages.

Five of the notebooks are of high school coursework such as Advanced Algebra, Latin, Grammar, United States history, and Greek philosophy, which gives an insight into high school education in the early twentieth century. Many of the notebooks are a mix of the above subjects.

The notebooks also include unsent or drafts of letters sharing personal news with her relatives including her cousin and brother. Additional notes are tipped into some of the notebooks with letters or academic notes.

Apart from these school textbooks, one notebook documents school expenditures, including expenses and vendors, suggesting that Rhoades had an administrative role in the school.

Rhoades studied in Kutztown, Pennsylvania. Of note, the Botany workbook is titled "Record of plant analyses," by A.C. Rothermel, principal, Keystone State Normal School, Kutztown, PA, and published in Kutztown, PA. by Journal and Patriot Printing House, 1902. It is filled with handwritten notes, drawings, and observations from Bessie M. Rhoades.

There are twenty-eight individual drawings of flowers and twenty-five handwritten entries of scientific observations with these drawings. A handwritten label on the front cover has Bessie's signature and the dates "May 6, 1903" and "April 28, 1904". It includes entries for many plant species. Some are identified by "common names" in addition to their proper order, genus, and species: Buttercup, Strawberry, Painted Cup, Violet, Geranium, Star of Bethlehem, Cinque Foil, Robins Plantain, Catnip, Speedwell, Mallow, Rattlesnake Weed, Oxeyed Daisy, Checker Berry, Money Wort, etc. Each entry allocates spaces to list observations about the plant, including the place and date where found, the type of soil in which it grew, the height and form of the plant, the etymology of the plant name, geography, propagation techniques, and uses (ornamental, medicinal, etc.) There are detailed prompts to encourage the study of the plant's anatomy and a Glossary of Botanical Terms.

Keywords

Women students

Botany

Notebooks

Orphanages -- Pennsylvania

Max Rambod